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THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War 50¢

Vol.12 No.4 **P.O. Box 25592 Chicago IL 60625** **NOV-DEC 1982**

PRAY FOR THE DEAD~FIGHT FOR THE LIVING

ACTION SET FOR VETS' DAY

Veterans Day, 1982, will be securely wrapped in the reddest, the whitest and the bluest of bunting. For Vietnam vets, there's the great danger that we will find ourselves inside the pretty packaging and, once the day is past, thrown away again!

For Vietnam Veterans Against the War, the call of the day will be clear: HONOR THE DEAD; FIGHT LIKE HELL FOR THE LIVING!

Veterans Day has, for years, been one traditional time for the politicians to beat the war drums hoping that, by invoking the dead of past wars they can stir enthusiasm for whatever military venture is next on their list. Since the Vietnam war, many of these ceremonies have been lower key; the Vietnam war and the U.S. government's loss in that war were not designed to inspire the youth of this country to sign up for another war.

But 1982 has something different: the "National Salute to Vietnam Veterans." Originally started by members of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (the VVMF is the group which was formed to finance the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington), the National Salute has taken off like firework with what seems to be the full support of the Reagan Administration. With unit reunions, parades, hospitality suites in the better hotels of Washington, concerts (billed as the "entertainers' salute to Vietnam Vets") even including one by the Army Band, Vietnam vets will finally have the "coming home parade" that we never had!

Well, vets, not quite! The vets who will be "honored during the "National Salute" are going to be those vets who have "made it." Unemployed vets, vets in prison, vets with less-than-honorable, vets suffering from post-traumatic stress--these will be conveniently omitted from the ceremonies as a part of the Reagan administration's attempt to make sure that Vietnam vets who don't meet the requirements are conveniently gotten rid of. In short, if you're a Vietnam vet who has not "made it," you can also forget it!

Along with every traditional veterans group in the country, VVAW will be there in Washington; if you want more information about what VVAW is planning, call the Washington, DC Regional Coordinator. But we see that someone must be there to represent the hundreds of thousands of Vietnam veterans who haven't "made it"--and that's one of the roles that VVAW will perform: to make sure that the Vietnam vet the government would prefer to ignore is still represented.

Around the country VVAW Chapters will be putting on Veterans Day activities. In Milwaukee plans call for a massive sign-up of veterans for the Agent Orange Class Action Suit. In San Antonio, there are plans for a special VVAW float for the parade. In Lansing, Michigan, since Vietnam vets were refused admission into the Veterans Day activities, VVAW will be doing activities of their own. Anywhere that VVAW is at work, Veterans Day activities will not be able to sweep the Vietnam vet under a convenient rug.

VVAW, across the states, will be repeating the same slogans:

SAVE OUR VETS CENTERS
NO MORE VIETNAMS
TEST, TREAT, COMPENSATE
AGENT ORANGE VICTIMS.

VET CENTERS UNDER ATTACK

EXCLUSIVE REPORT

Before Commander Nemmo hit the dust as top dog at the VA recently, he made his rounds to the press and the veterans' "establishment" with assurances that all was well with the vet centers ("Operation Outreach"). His understanding of the problems confronting the vets centers had as much depth as his future with the VA.

Nemmo was critisized, after his demise, as being "insensitive on veterans issues, with particular regard to Vietnam veterans" and running a downright crappy VA Administration with a "weak" relationship to the Office of Management and Budget. OMB, run by our boy Davey Stockman, holds the purse strings for the VA among other federal agencies.

For all his failings--and they were many--Nemmo got right to the point on his perspective on improvement in the vets centers. He felt that things were looking better due to "major personnel changes within 'Operation Outreach.'" From the perspective of the Vietnam veteran clientele of the vets centers, this movement Nemmo talks about shows one of the major crises; it is certainly not a solution. Across the country, vets' center leaders are quitting their jobs, either being forced off the job by the VA or giving up after years of beating their heads against the stone wall of VA bureaucracy. All too often these are the individuals whose attitude of vets helping vets, of caring about the vets and the programs for the vets, were what made the vets centers worthwhile.

Operation Outreach, long a thorn in the side of the VA bureaucrats is being slowly but increasingly brought under control with an iron fist. Competent people in the program are being driven out wholesale to be replaced with others who will toe the VA line. A program of planned neglect existed from the onset of operation outreach which never allowed the dream to became a reality. Many of the centers have been winging it from day one, sustaining

Continued Inside

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their momentum only from the hard work and enthusiasm of the people working in the centers. That precious resource of service is now wearing thin.

Some of the rumblings within the Operation Outreach program became public in October of 1981 at hearings before a subcommittee on government operations of the U.S. Congress. Testifying for the VA were such heavies as Donald Custis, Chief Medical Director, Donald T. Crawford, Chief of Outreach Services, and Jack Ewalt, Director of Mental Health and Behavioral Sciences among others. They were sent to the wall around the issue of $16 million appropriated by Congress for the contract-fees service program (to aid outreach and services in areas not having vet centers as well as existing centers).

Based on testimony, the $16 million never made it to Operation Outreach. Apparently Custis channelled the money back into the general medical pork barrel. Crawford, who claimed never to have requested the funds, was left to twist slowly in the wind, was later to get the ax as Outreach Director and was relegated to some other VA cubbyhole.

Other interesting "facts" surfaced during the hearings. There was "a structural defect from the beginning" which placed the control of vets centers under the VA mental professionals who "were unable to deal with post-traumatic stress disorder" from the outset.

Arising from tensions between the staff at the vets centers and their clients as a result of Reagan's attempt to budget the program out of existence (an attempt which was beaten back by vets around the country), the Reagan Administration, with the help of VA administrators, "have decided to administer the outreach program out of existence." (This come from William Mahedy, former team leader of the San Diego vet center.)

The findings and conclusions of the hearing were, in part:

1) Management of the program by the VA Central Office has been inadequate (no surprises there!).

2) Two years after the program's inauguration, no standards of performance and program guidelines were published.

3) Fiscal controls are weak or absent. The VA cannot account for as much as 40% of the funds for the program.

4) Vets centers are made subordinate to VA hospitals in their areas for operational administrative matters and that while hospitals have a support obligation on request from the vets centers, they have no authority to extend this into operational decision making over the vets centers.

Following the hearings, the VA, in order to solve some of the problems which were publicized, issued VA circular 10-82-101. However, not only has the new circular not been implemented in any meaningful way across the country, but some vets center personnel believe that the proper VA officials have not even read the circular. There seems little doubt, however, that centers are in an administrative mess and the VA is using this situation against the centers.

And the vets who've been using the centers? Prior to the 1981 hearings, 95% of the vets using the centers were satisfied with the services, a great tribute to the people who were staffing the centers and keeping them going in spite of the VA.

These are the individuals now leaving--for whatever reason--and the vets centers will be poorer as a result. Vets who use the centers should be asking a lot of questions: why is there a large turnover of personnel in some areas? Why are needed services being eliminated in some places? Have the vet rap groups stopped? Why does it seem to take forever for new vets centers to open? Why are the great majority of the vet center jobs temporary with no employment security?

The questions can be almost endless. VVAW will be conducting investigations in cities around the country--based on the vets who are the clientele of the vets centers, and on the vets and others who have been making the centers work. And we are looking for input from whomever has something to add. We hope to see a coherent picture of vets centers across the country, a picture that we can use to help give the vets centers back to the vets for whom there were originally intended.

Vets centers were set up on the principle of help without hassle--and because they were just independent enough, the VA bureaucrats and the administration have been trying to do them in ever since. So we see things like the VA hospital which serves 4-5 mental health walk-in patients a week work to crush a vets center which deals with a hundred in the same period of time.

The vets centers were created for us, the Vietnam veteran. Their continued existence is our responsibility. VVAW wants to join with other vets to take up the fight to save and preserve the vets centers.

AFFIXING BLAME FOR OUR ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

From Washington, DC:
Of our two original centers, one, in a riot-torn corridor, has 3 staff members, only one of whom is a Vietnam vet. They now have one group session, mostly for walk-ins who are severely troubled. The other center has one full-time staff member who is not a Vietnam veteran (they fired a dedicated combat Vietnam vet, a real knife-in-the-back job). They are having no sessions. I hear from people who've gone down there that absolutely no services are available. Neither of these centers are in areas attractive for driving to or parking at night. The suburbs here have no vets centers.

Physically, they are in horrifying shape. The one on Capitol Hill has no working bathroom, no ramp for wheelchairs, unsafe and erratic electric wiring, and no routine maintenance (promised by the VA medical center, but never done). A pilot program to set up rap groups at Lorton Prison died when the vet staffer was fired.

In fact, at present the only rap group anyone knows about in the entire DC area (that's 2 million people) is the one VVAW members set up at a local community college.

From Lincoln, Nebraska:
"Our vet center had a resignation of a team leader back in mid-September. And, of course, the VA is moving right along at a snail's pace to replace this man. In the meantime, the Vietnam veterans in the community become the victims again. I guess this is now becoming a standard policy of the government: we'll give you a vets center, we'll staff it with remfs and let it fall on its ass, and then turn around and say but we had a vets center for those guys...." Jerry Kinney, VVAW, Lincoln, NB.

As readers of THE VETERAN know from the last issue, in Alabama, the government attack has been different, with vets centers leaders being indicted for drug violations. But, as pointed out in the "Alabama Veteran Services Newsletter" (Box 123, Mulga, AL 35118), the drug violations "were only a smoke screen covering a federal assault of Vietnam veterans programs and leadership."

For more information or to help with the defense of our vet brothers in Alabama, contact the Vietnam Veterans of Alabama Defense Fund at the address given above.

VETERANS SELF-HELP GUIDE
VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

Psychological Problems & Vietnam Vets

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS

"My life is really turning upside down. I hardly ever speak to the wife and I feel more secure in the basement with no one to talk to. I don't get along too well at work...it's hard to talk to them; they weren't there!"

"I always have the same dream. There is Smitty with his brains all over the bunker. Why didn't it get me? That round was meant for me. I've drifted from 80 jobs in the last 12 years. They all end the same way. I think of Smitty and I get depressed and drink. I don't come in very regular, and whammo! I'm fired."

These are only two of the thousands of Vietnam vet stories, years after the end of the war in Southeast Asia. These are the forgotten casualties of Vietnam. Two million, seven hundred thousand vets fought in Vietnam at one time or another. It's only a matter of degree as to how--and how much--they were affected by the experience; not all have overcome the contradictions.

We talk about "contradictions" because the reality of the war in Indochina was in complete contradiction to everything we had learned. And it's a contradiction now to have to place that experience within the current social view of reality.

Post traumatic stress disorder (ptsd) is an all-encompassing name given to describe an affliction that affects a portion of the people who served in Vietnam and survived. Post traumatic stress disorder is a major anxiety resulting from external stress beyond experiences which are usual and tolerable.

For many vets the build-up began in basic training. Here the military slowly began its calculated effort to wipe out the soldier's individual dignity and respect for human life. Throughout training the racism of the military became apparent especially in rank structure, and grew blatant during the final preparation for Vietnam. And then the soldier ended up in Vietnam, unfamiliar with the culture, unable to speak the language, cut off from former companions, afraid to relate to the Vietnamese, isolated from his own feelings, and trapped in an absurd situation of survival.

Evolution of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

It wasn't until World War I that specific clinical syndromes came to be associated with combat duty. In earlier wars it was assumed that such casualties were simply manifestations of poor discipline and cowardice. In World War I the term "shell shock" appeared since some thought that the high air pressure of exploding shells caused physiological damage.

During World War II psychological casualties were removed from the battle area and put in hospitals. In the early years of the war the psychiatric casualty rate had risen 300% over World War I. At one point, psychiatric discharges exceeded the total number of men being newly drafted.

The Vietnam war began with low psychiatric evacuation rates, only 12 per thousand. But as the war progressed, a previously obscure but well documented phenomenon of World War II began to reappear: and the end of the Second World War, vets suffering from acute combat reaction as well as some of their peers with no such problems began to complain of common symptoms: intense anxiety, battle dreams, explosive agressive behavior and problems with personal relations. Just like World War II vets, here were Vietnam veterans who had "no problems" fighting the war but now were suffering from delayed reactions whose symptoms did not get better or go away with the passage of time.

After battles in professional and legal arenas, with a series of experts taking up the fight of vets, the V.A. agreed to a new category of disability: post traumatic stress disorder, acute, chronic and/or delayed.

There were unique aspects of the Vietnam war that helped to create what would become known as ptsd.

1) Most of us volunteered--80%--to go to Vietnam. We were simple-minded patriots who OD'd on John Wayne and figured we were fighting to keep the world safe for democracy. The Commies had to be stopped in Vietnam before they were in San Francisco!

Once we were faced with the realities of Vietnam--the corruption, the lies, the black-market, the South Vietnamese military--we just were not prepared for the let-down. When we returned to the "world" we were forced to look at what we had done. One way to adjust was to not admit the problems and forget the war. But, our problems didn't go away and nobody seemed to care.

2) Entering Vietnam all fired-up, we were not prepared for the meaninglessness of it all. Huge battles were fought over territory which was then given up, only to be fought over once more. Some officers received medals for flying over a battle while ground troops couldn't get enough C-rations, because someone in the rear was making bucks on the side by selling them. We had been told one thing about the war by our government; the facts of life in Vietnam just did not match up.

And there was the simple fact that the U.S. lost the war, and source of significant stress for some participants. It was the first clear defeat for the U.S. in our national history and for some vets, the defeat has added a major fault in the

turn to next page

PTSD

psychological defensive structure surrounding the war experience.

3) Throughout the war in Vietnam there was no certainty about exactly who was the enemy, and, because of that, exactly what "atrocities" meant. The first problem encountered in Vietnam, especially for the combat soldier, was the total lack of structure. There was no "front" as in other wars; there was little of the "order of battle" where soldiers act out their role as fighters.

In Marine boot camp we used to have pictures of slant-eyed people over the gun racks. If we used the word "Vietnamese" we were hit and hit hard. "Those are gooks, boy! You better remember it because that kid could have a grenade!" Vietnam was a war of liberation where almost any individual we met could have been giving aid and comfort to the "enemy."

The dehumanizing training, racism and frustration of combat with an unseen enemy helped provide the climate for the U.S. forces to commit atrocities.

In Southeast Asia there were atrocities aimed at the people--things like search and destroy missions, torture, captives tossed out of helicopters, massacres, etc. There was the atrocity aimed at the land: Agent Orange and other defoliants. Witnessing or participating in atrocities left some vets with brutalized sectors of the personality, psychic numbing and guilt.

4) Vietnam had some combat experiences that made it unique. All war has a profound effect on those who participate; the individual is never quite the same afterwards. But not since 2 years spent fighting the Phillipine guerillas after the Spanish-American war have American troops been involved in a totally guerilla war.

The liberation forces in Vietnam were many times elusive and uncatchable; often they had the full support of the people. It didn't take long for GI's to realize that the Vietnamese didn't really want us there at all. The frustration level was high.

In the ground war in Vietnam our standard policy was to try to separate the "fish from the sea." We created a free-fire zone on paper and everyone had to be out in 72 hours, moved into barbed-wire "relocation camps." Then a "search and destroy" mission was mounted, all villages in the area were destroyed and burned along with crops; anyone seen moving in the area was a VC and killed.

The object of this exercise was to get a "body count." Progress of the war was measured in number of enemy killed; promotions and extra R&R were all rewards for a high body count. Because they were so important to military careers, body counts grew as they were passed along the military chain of command: lots of GI's had the experience of seeing two dead enemy soldiers and then reading about 50 killed a couple of weeks later.

All of this was American government policy right up to the highest levels of command. For the individual soldier, the guilt involved in some of our actions was too much once we came back to a society which had used us once and then threw us away.

5) Our reception at home--or lack of it--was at the bottom of long-term delayed stress problems for many vets. The policy of DEROS (date of expected return from overseas) added to our problems; we were not in for the duration as in some earlier wars: we were there for 12 or 13 months unless we extended, and then were back home, unprogramed, within 72 hours. The DEROS policy meant, further, that we came home alone.

'AGENT ORANGE? WE'RE STUDYING ON IT — WHAT MORE DO YOU WANT?'

Tours were solitary episodes and units couldn't build the unity and skill levels of other wars. The "Fucking New Guys" were shunned by "Short-timers" and the Short-timers got rear duty (sometimes) for their last two months; often, they felt guilty about the friends they were leaving behind.

Many lived in the unreal world of counting the calendar to return to "the world," somehow sure that it had not changed. The awakening was rude when we returned home to heavy unemployment, a half-assed GI Bill, and communities that didn't seem to care. Our sacrifices were for nothing and it looked like we were the suckers.

Many vets did not agree with the anti-war movement they found when returning home. The story of the veteran being spit on at the airport was retold and retold, true or not. VVAW played a special role in giving vets a way to relate to their own feelings about the war they had been through. We were America's first veterans to come home during a war to protest; we were against the U.S. government policy in Vietnam and wanted to bring our brothers home.

Even we separated ourselves from the civilian anti-war movement a lot of times. People took out their frustrations over an unpopular war on the returning veterans. TV shows and movies consistently portrayed the Vietnam vet as the drug-crazed baby-burner; never did they look into the nature of U.S. government policy.

How Does Post Traumatic Stress Manifest Itself?

The problems of ptsd can manifest themselves in two basic ways: psychological symptoms and, second, problems in how we relate to life in general and our interpersonal relations.

1) There are the classical traumatic neuroses symptoms such as flashback, nightmares, rage, spells, anxiety, etc.

2) Many veterans have a continuing battle with depression and guilt. Our suicide rate is 23% higher than the general population. More Vietnam vets have died since returning stateside as a result of self-destructive behavior than died in combat--53,000. We were trained--or learned by ourselves--to be cold and uncaring and not to get too attached to people. In Vietnam we handled the deaths of our buddies "in the shortest time possible." Some vets feel guilty about having survived; others cannot handle sharing that guilt with non-veterans including wives and families.

Rage: Our rage can be frightening even to ourselves. Frequently we strike out without reason and that includes our wives and children. The rage of a Vietnam veteran stems from the feeling of having been betrayed by our country and by the military; we were forced to participate in an absurd and brutal and corrupt situation. Violence is one outlet for this rage and is the result of a war experience where violence was the quick and absolute solution to any problem, especially where there is confusion or uncertainty about who and where the enemy is.

Avoidance of Feelings; Alienation: The alienation began when we returned to a society that neither understood or cared what we had experience in Vietnam.

The evolution of emotional deadness began in boot camp: our enemy was dehumanized and we developed the ability to cut off our own feelings as a defense against the death around us.

Our return to the States, usually within 72 hours after we

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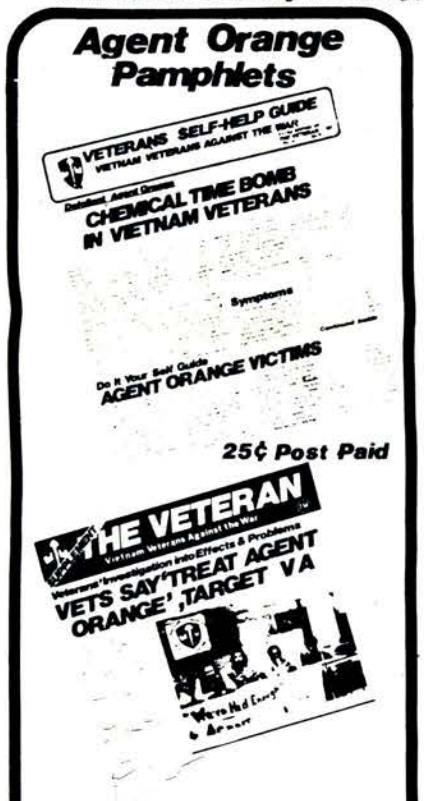
Agent Orange Pamphlets



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VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

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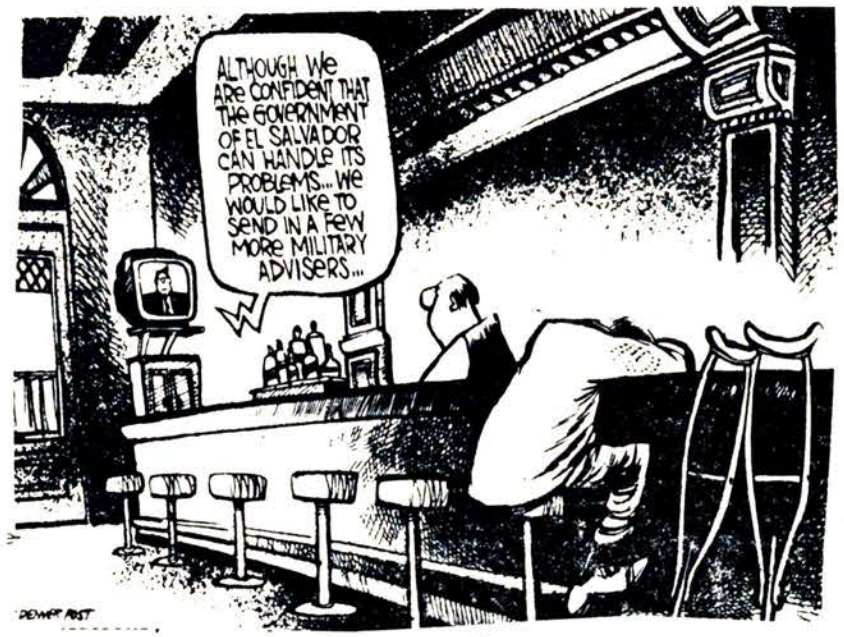

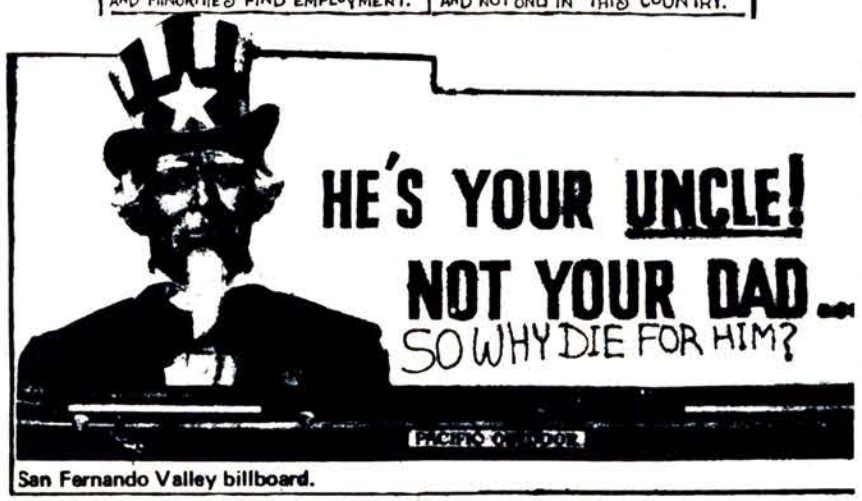

San Fernando Valley billboard.

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STOP THE DRAFT BEFORE IT STOPS YOU

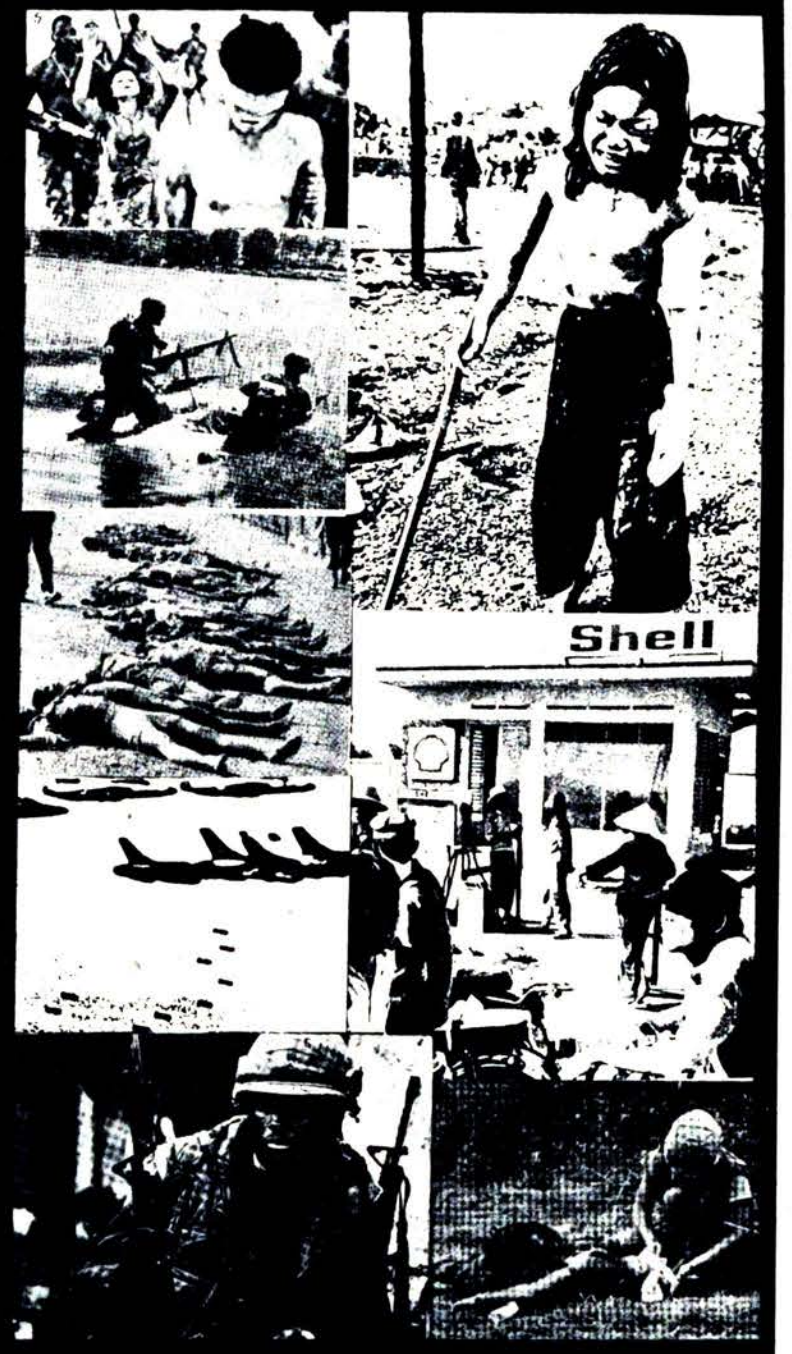
NO REGISTRATION

Military for whom?

The only uniform that Ronald Reagan Jr is about to wear is a pink tou-tou. John-John Kennedy last saluted 20 years ago at his father's funeral, and sure as hell is not going to Lebanon with the Marines. Very few children of senators or congressmen ever turned up in combat units in Vietnam; the only Rockefeller kid killed lately was eaten by cannibals while playing anthropologist in and around Pacific islands.

Who managed to get out of the last draft? Among others, college kids (and that takes a whole lot more bucks today), men with psychological or medical problems (that requires only buying a doctor) or people doing essential jobs (like working on dad's re-election campaign?). Even the sons of high-ranking officers only got close enough to combat to have their tickets punched so they could move up the brass ladder. Meanwhile, out in the boonies, the sons of working people had to hack their way through the jungles or tap dance through minefields.

Nothing is going to change this time around. What it comes down to is this: a rich man's war (and profits) and a poor man's fight (and blood). The rich and their children can sit back and enjoy the butter while minority and working people's kids get the guns. This time, hopefully, the poor kids will know which way to point them.



VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR®
We Won't Fight Another Rich Man's War

Rich Man's War, Poor Man's Fight
DRAFT NEAR

Reagan is hardly famous for being true to his word. Whether its tax hikes, V.A. budget cuts or registration for the draft, Reagan's campaign promises have turned out to be so much hot air.

We are being told now that registration for the draft is not the draft itself. Don't worry, President Reagan won't send any young Americans to fight in Central America or the Middle East or especially Africa. Well, boot camp isn't combat but its purpose is to prepare you for combat, and the purpose of registration is to prepare for the draft!

To get over, the government is putting out a number of positions concerning what registration and the draft are and are not for. It is important to examine them both for what they say and for what they leave out.

"We need registration to speed up a draft in case of war with the Russians." Beside the simple point that a war with the Soviet Union would probably escalate into nuclear war before anyone could be called up, this idea is used frequently--and is one of the most absurd of arguments. Consider the state of the military bases in the event of an outbreak of war: they would be full, not only with volunteers but with inactive reservists, reservists, national guards who need additional training and retirees returning to active duty. This process alone would take more time than emergency registration and draft. Reservists and the national guard exist to be called to active duty; that's why billions of dollars are poured into them. It's true that they weren't called up for Vietnam (the only recent war where they were not mobilized) but that was one way that Johnson used to escalate the war without admitting it. The draft allowed him to increase cannon fodder from youth fresh our of high school on his command; there is no reason to believe that Reagan or any other President would not do the same.

"It's everyone's duty to serve their country." True, perhaps, in the abstract, but the reality of who "serves" and where they "serve" shows that some people end up with a distinctly heavier duty than others. Every draft, except for the Second World War has been grossly unequal. In the Civil War people could buy their way out, and wealthy patriots like John D. Rockefeller let some one else serve for him. A fine family tradition--and it hasn't changed all that much until today. Poor whites, Blacks, Latins and the children of workers do the serving and the fighting, with only a few exceptions. Vietnam is a prime example: 18 million young men were eligible for "service" during Vietnam; 6 million served, 2.8 million in Vietnam. And who do you think served in the front lines? No, it was not the sons of Congressmen nor those of the heads of Standard Oil. It wasn't even the $100,000 a year football players (who couldn't pass the physical) nor even the son of John Wayne. The simple fact is that they got the butter while the poor got the guns, once again making seem not so trite the old slogan about the "Rich man's war/ Poor man's fight!"

"What are you afraid of? It's just registration, not the draft!" Registration exists for one thing: the draft. If the government did not plan to use it they wouldn't be going through the political hassle, especially during an election year. After the Pentagon Papers, Watergate and Vietnam, an American would have to be a fool to trust the government. And the Reagan Administration has not demonstrated anymore respect for the truth than did Johnson or Nixon.

Where We Came From, Who Are We, Who Can Join

VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

A National Veterans Organization Recognized as Tax Deductible.

Vietnam Veterans Against the War began in 1967 to join the ranks of those who wanted an end to U.S. involvement in Indochina. Basic principles of the organization have continued ever since: we have fought against unjust wars, whether the U.S. invasion of Indochina or, potentially, El Salvador, or the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan. We have supported, by whatever means were possible, those who are fighting for their own liberation. And we have stood with veterans of all eras in fighting for the things we need, have been promised, and have been earned.

From its early days VVAW has operated on the knowledge that the government will give vets what we need only when forced to do so--that vets get nothing for nothing. We've learned that when one vet fights alone, there is a limited amount he or she can accomplish, but when veterans unite to fight together, we can do much. VVAW has seen some real successes: we helped to put an end to U.S. troops in Southeast Asia, we helped get Nixon tossed out of office on his ear, we helped to win (to a great extent) amnesty for war resisters. With other vets groups we helped to stir up enough public furor that the Veterans Administration took its first halting steps to look for an answer to Agent Orange poisoning, and recognized what VVAW used to call Post Vietnam Syndrome when we were leading rap groups in 1970 (and is now called "post-traumatic stress or delayed stress syndrome") as a service-connected disability.

VVAW has consistently stood with the interests of vets of all eras, especially Vietnam and Vietnam-era vets. Sometimes this has brought us into conflict with the "traditional" vets organizations. While they have tended to stand behind the U.S. government and its various warlike manueverings, VVAW has always asked "Why?" We've opposed moves toward war, fight against registration and the draft which will follow, opposed inflated defense expenditures, welcomed vets with "bad" discharges into the organization and fought to get the discharge system dropped entirely from the military.

We know what it means to have been used once by the government and its corporate backers, and then be thrown away with a bad GI Bill, wretched healthcare, Agent Orange ravaging our bodies, vivid memories of the war often ravaging our minds, no jobs, and all the multitude of other problems Vietnam vets often face. We do not intend to see our children go through the same thing in the next war for somebody else's profit!

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ARE YOU WILLING TO
GUATEMALA

The men were first castrated, then their eyes were put out with needles. Their hands tied behind their backs, they were thrown on top of one another and the pile was then doused with gasoline and set afire. The women were raped. Then they were forced to watch as their children had their bellies cleaved with machetes and were left to agonize, screaming, on the ground. One mother was forced to kiss her baby's head which was presented to her on the end of a bayonet. Another group of children were ordered to play and, as they attempted to obey, grenades were thrown into their midst. Almost mercifully, the women, having witnessed the annihilation of their families, were dragged into the church which was then set on fire. Anyone attempting to escape was dismembered with machetes.

Unfortunately, this is not fiction. The torments are real. They are happening today. And, perhaps most important for us, the U.S. is supporting the slaughter.

The victims of repression in Guatemala today are the indians, descendants of the Mayas, who now live largely in the northern and western departments (states) of Guatemala. Their persecutors have for decades been the military rulers of the country. But none has acted with more deceit or barbarity than the current ruler of the country, Gen. Efraim Rios Montt.

Guatemala lives today under a state of seige. The constitution has been suspended, the press censored, public meetings prohibited. The army and paramilitary death squads have been ordered to stop their killings and kidnappings in the capital, Guatemala City. The appearance, then, is one of relative calm. The diplomatic corps and capital residents speak of a return to quieter times. But in the isolated rural areas, the "ranchos" and "aldeas" of El Quiche, Solala, San Marcos, and Huehuetenango, a full-fledged program of extermination of the indians is taking place. The massacres and wholesale destruction of indian villages began in earnest in June of this year. Refugees from Guatemala, survivors of army attacks on their villages, tell of the troops arriving in helicopters. The soldiers then burn houses and crops, kill livestock and finally torture and kill any people who have remained behind. Some people don't flee because of age or sickness; others remain because of their faith in God and in the soldiers; still others are simply caught by surprise. All are eventually killed, usually without the use of a bullet.

Many indian families, stripped of all they own, are forced to survive somehow in the forests of the Guatemalan highlands. Those who live near the border with Mexico hide by day and walk at night, going days without food, to reach the relative safety of Chiapas, a southern Mexican border state. They are arriving now by the thousands. Widows will come with from

Continued

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VVAW is a democratic organization. Chapters decide on local projects and programs under the general guidelines of the national program. Chapters elect local leadership and representatives to the National Steering Committee meetings where major organizational decisions are made and national coordinators elected. These coordinators are responsible for day-to-day leadership and publish the national newspaper, THE VETERAN.

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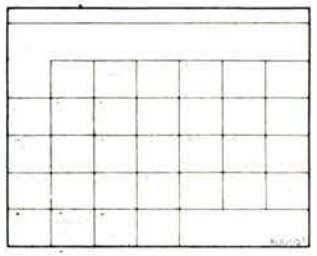

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BY-LAWS OF VVAW

1. The name of the organization shall be Vietnam Veterans Against the War.
2. Membership in the organization is open to all veterans (regardless of discharge) and to non-veterans interested in joining together to build a veterans movement. While VVAW is made up primarily of Vietnam and Vietnam-era veterans and their families, the organization also welcomes veterans from other eras and non-veterans.
3. Membership requirements include filling out a membership form, paying the $5 initiation fee and $1 monthly dues to the national office. Other requirements, not in conflict with national requirements, may be added by local chapters.
4. Local VVAW chapters will decide on their own chapter structure, by-laws and dues. Chapters will, to the best of their ability, work on the national programs of VVAW plus whatever local campaigns they decide on which are not in opposition to national programs.
5. National meetings of the organization, open to all members, will be held at least once yearly. A National Steering Committee, made up of the national officers, the regional officers, & an elected representative from each chapter shall meet as necessary. Such meetings may consist of phone calls to the chapter representatives if necessary.
6. National officers are elected at national meetings for a period of a year. They are responsible for the day-to-day operation of the organization, for speaking on behalf of the national organization, and for the publication and content of THE VETERAN and "The Guidon."
7. Regional coordinators, as needed will be elected at national meetings to serve 1 year terms; regional coordinators will facilitate and coordinate regional activities, aid the building of local chapters, and provide input from chapters into the national office.
8. Policies, programs and positions of VVAW nationally will, as much as possible, be decided at national meetings. If that is not possible, such decisions will be made by the National Steering Committee or, in emergencies, by the National Office.

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A HISTORY OF STR

In June of 1967, six Vietnam veterans joined in an anti-war parade in New York City, marching under a banner which described their position on the war: Vietnam Veterans Against the War. The name and the organization continue today.

In 1967 Vietnam veterans were primarily interested in stopping the Vietnam war, in "bringing our brothers home." At the same time, vets could not forget the way in which they were being treated by their government and, in particular, by the Veterans Administration; nor did they forget that, without a loud public voice in opposition, the U.S. government and the people who most profit from a war would both carry on in Vietnam and search around for new military ventures around the globe.

At the very beginning of VVAW there was a clear sense of being different from veterans of earlier wars. VVAW was the first organization of veterans whose purpose was to protest a war in which they had fought and which was, in fact, still going on. But Vietnam veterans had a further sense of difference: we were treated as far from heroes (as had returnees from other wars) which affected how we were received by large portions of the American public, but even more how we were received by the government and the Veterans Administration. The feeling carried over into how we were received (or not received) by traditional veterans organizations such as the American Legion or Veterans of Foreign Wars which wanted nothing at all to do with our experiences, our politics or our persons.

Not only were the experiences in fighting the war different, and the reception at home unlike that of earlier vets, but the symptoms that began to appear among Vietnam vets were also unique to our war. In late 1969 VVAW chapters began holding rap groups for what we described at "Post-Vietnam Syndrome," our name for stress problems among Vietnam vets. Ten years later the same problems would be recognized by the V.A. as "post-traumatic stress disorder." And then there was--and is--Agent Orange, the defoliant used throughout Vietnam, and the devastating results of exposure which began to appear both in veterans and our children.

All of these things go into making up what VVAW is today: a group of active veterans and friends and supporters who fight for a decent life for veterans and against future Vietnams. We've learned that we can't fight the fight alone and expect to win so we've joined together to fight for what we need.

Veteran hurling medal on the steps of Congress.

1967, when VVAW first made its appearance, was a period when the Vietnam War was raging, both in Vietnam and on the TV sets of the American people. Debate about the war reached a fever pitch in the U.S. and around the world. In city after city, and in smaller towns around the country, Americans banded together to protest the war; in many places the local groups welcomed Vietnam veterans who were against the war. These vets had the ability to speak and march against the war, based on their experience, as best they understood it, and added a real credibility to the protest actions.

Groups of veterans around the country took on the name of VVAW and held a series of activities, usually peaceful but occasionally bursting into headlines as vets and police came into conflict. Operation RAW (standing for "Rapid American Withdrawal") was the first national action. Held in the spring of 1970, Operation RAW saw VVAW members from around the country march from Trenton, NJ to Valley Forge, PA in three days worth of Vietnam-type actions which the veterans hoped would bring home to a segment of the American people what it would feel like to be Vietnamese. In towns along the way guerilla theatre presentations gave the vets the chance to re-enact search-and-destroy missions they had been on during the war. Operation RAW also provided a chance for VVAW members from around the country to draw up plans for a realistic national organization.

Early national meetings drew up plans for the Winter Soldier Investigation, held in Detroit in early 1971. At a time when the My Lai massacre was in the news and when the military and the government were trying to say that My Lai was an aberration, caused by a few misguided men, VVAW members talked about war crimes in which they had been involved while in Vietnam, showing that My Lai was only a small piece in the puzzle of an entire and consistent U.S. policy toward the Vietnamese during the Vietnam war.

Anti-war protests continued to grow around the country; each new escalation of U.S. involvement led to escalations in the protests by the American people. In April of 1971, VVAW planned and carried out "Operation Dewey Canyon III," what we call a "limited incursion into the halls of Congress." The first two Dewey Canyon Operations had been invasions of Laos conducted secretly; this one was open and public, and ended with 1100 Vietnam veterans hurling

VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

TRUGGLE FOR VETERANS

their medals, won in Vietnam, back at the government which had presented them. The impact of the demonstration was massive and helped to set the stage for May Day 1971, the largest anti-war demonstration which Washington had ever seen.

In the months and years that followed, VVAW was involved in hundreds of well-publicized actions--the takeover of the Statue of Liberty in 1971 (an action that was repeated as preparation for VVAW's part in a counter-bicentennial demonstration in Philadelphia on the 4th of July in 1976). There was the seizure of the South Vietnamese Embassy in Washington in reaction to the bombing of Haiphon and Hanoi. Well-publicized and emotional meetings took place between VVAW members and our former enemies--members of the National Liberation Front--in places around the world, including several trips by VVAW members to Hanoi. VVAW sandbags were set up around the Memorial Arch in St Louis; VVAW members led an anti-war salute at the halftime of a football game in Ann Arbor. And there were thousands of less publicized actions by VVAW chapters and members from coast to coast. And as the organization made its statements against the war, more and more vets, coming home from that war, saw the organization as saying things they too wanted to say.

As demonstrations mounted, VVAW began to identify more and more clearly the source of what we were fighting--that it was the U.S. government and the corporate system that held it up which needed the war. And the government, growing more and more frantic at the anti-war movement, saw VVAW as one of the forces it had to attack. As VVAW was making preparations for a sizable ap-

pearance at the Republican Convention in Miami Beach, the government struck first with indictments of a number of the southern leadership of the organization, a group which became known as the "Gainesville 8." VVAW and others around the country built a movement not only to say that the Gainesville 8 were innocent of the charges against them, but that it was the nervous government that was in fact the guilty party.

Demonstrations during Miami Beach's convention, and during the Nixon innauguration in Washington in 1973 were followed by a campaign to kick Nixon out of office, a project which was completed in the summer of 1975. As U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia lessened, VVAW became more involved in the movement for amnesty for war resisters and for veterans with bad discharges. June of 1974 saw VVAW leading a large demonstration in Washington to raise the cry for universal and unconditional amnesty and to honor the peace agreements.

Throughout most of VVAW's history we have seen the slogan "used once and thrown away" as describing the Vietnam veterans experience. For many of us, once the war was over we knew we were not about to let ourselves be used in the same way again. At the same time we were determined to see

that our children or younger brothers and sisters not be used as we were in a war similar to Vietnam. We took our experience out to as many people as possible. And we concentrated not only on how we were used, but also on how vets were thrown away following their tour in the war: the lack of an adequate GI Bill, high vet unemployment, no adequate job training, a VA system so clogged by red tape and bureaucracy that vets could barely get the services that everyone agreed we should have, much less the things that we thought vets should have.

It was 1979 when information about Agent Orange hit the veterans community putting all Vietnam vets on noice that they may have killed us in Vietnam and we didn't even know it. Worse still we found that our exposure to chemicals in Vietnam was having an effect on our children; further, there seemed to be nothing which, at the time, could be done for either testing or treatment. VVAW immediately took up a campaign for testing, treatment and compensation for victims of Agent Orange poisoning; through a series of publications, actions, support of interested scientists, lawyers and others; and working with a number of state agencies to get out the word, VVAW has done what we could to spread the information about the status of vets affected by Agent Orange. The struggle to win testing, treatment and compensation for victims continues, and despite massive foot-dragging by the VA, the first faltering official steps are being taken.

Agent Orange was one of the major issues which brought VVAW and other vets groups together at Operation Dewey Canyon IV in Washington in May of 1982 when vets, many of whom had hoped they had made their last trip to Washington in protest, met once again to talk to Congress, picket the VA, march to Arlington and enjoy the comradeshipe which comes from common struggle. A decent life for veterans, and no more Vietnams were demands which united veterans from states across the country.

25th STEERING COMM. NATIONAL VVAW MEETING

The 25th national meeting ofVVAW was held in Chicago and came on the heels of "Operation Dewey Canyon IV, " and was held in the same sense of spirit and cooperation. The nearly two full days of meeting emphasized the roots of the organization and the pride we have for ourselves. Reuniting friends and co-workers combined with the serious decision-making of the meeting and demonstrated the essential democracy that is part of VVAW.

The meeting was highlighted by a couple of events focusing on Agent Orange. Maude DeVictor, the "Mother ofAgent Orange" was presented with the first of VVAW's "Veterans' Service Award" for her continued participation in the struggle to make the VA accountable for what happens to vets and their families concerning Agent Orange. The award came, as the presenter noted, "from deep in the hearts of all vets" in response to what Maude has done for us. And VVAW is proud to have been the first organization to officially recognize what this brave fellow veteran has done for the rest of us.

Other awards, to recognize significant contributions to the cause of vets were given to Ann Bailey of Milwaukee, to Bob Gibson of Australia, and to several members of the VVAW National Office.

Updating the situation with veterans and the Agent Orange class action suit was Keith Kavanaugh of the office of Yannacone and Yannacone in New York. For more information about this situation, get in touch with the Milwaukee Chapter of VVAW.

The structure of the meeting was loose, at best, in order to build a greater sense of the democratic organization which was the sponsor of the meeting. Though a number of chapters could not come to the meeting because of the present economic situation, we tried, as much as possible, to include their views as part of the meeting.

The meeting marked a 15-year milestone for the organizationt and a continued commitment to maintain ourselves as the first and foremost fighting vets group. All participants though sometimes worn down by the volume of activity, stayed around afterwards to be a part of the family-like activity that is part of a VVAW event. Even diehard opponents of meetings were moved and the renewal of commitment was shared by all.

PAYING YOUR WAY

Something many of us take for granted is the maintenance of OUR organization. Since I joined the national staff, I've seen hundreds of letters requesting copies of the VETERAN, The Agent Orange Dossier, and other self-help material--and beaucoup additional requests for all manner of things. We have provided ALL, to the best of our ability, and have, on more than one occasion, dug into scarce personal money in order to accomodate a request.

The VVAW dues structure is quite simple. So simple, in fact, that many find it easy to forget just where they stand. The $1 per month is easily lost in the overall shuffle--but that $1 equals five stamps for mailings; contact with incarcerated vets, answering questions or just keeping the organization "in touch." Phone calls and extra-heavy "bulk mailings" add to the drain. I'm simply asking for your help in recognizing that reagonomics affects us all!

Please check your own dues status to see if you're current. Please, also, check to see if you're a subscriber to THE VETERAN (it doesn't come automatically with membership). Basically, let's all pull together to maintain solidarity in the continuing struggle. Whatever we do, let's do it together. It is fundemental to the organization that WE are YOU is US! We depend onOUR support!

VVAW is growing very rapidly. The efforts of many brothers and sisters are seeing to the maintenance of this organization as THE FIRST and FOREMOST "Fighting Veterans Group." Please, Join In and do your part. We're ALL in this together!

Lee Thank you,
Lee Channing, for the
VVAW National Staff

Vietnam Veterans STRUGGLES IN OUR FUTURE

VVAW sees no lessening in the need for an organization of Vietnam vets, friends, and supporters and families to continue to fight for what Vietnam vets and our families need. And we see an increasing need for Vietnam veterans to have a voice which will bring our experience to bear on the expanding militarism of the U.S. government--we still refuse to see our children used as we were.

Agent Orange will continue to be an issue until the V.A. finally lives up to its obligation and provides what's needed. Under a Reagan Administration where all sorts of social programs are being slashed, one of the few programs of value to Vietnam vets--the Veterans Outreach Program--is in danger of being gutted and discarded. VVAW is mobilizing support for returning the Vets Centers to the vets for the use of vets and to meet the needs of vets, not some Washington political expediency.

There is no indication that the intentions of the U.S. government and the corporate powers that stand behind that government are anymore peaceful than they have been in the past though there may be more skillful lies in this administration. Whether Central America, the Middle East, South Korea, or almost anywhere else around the world, the U.S. government is ready to "defend" what it considers its "vital interests." As we learned in Vietnam, these "vital interests" are not in the interests of the people who must do the fighting and the dying.

VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

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Anti-draft protesters burning a draft card.

FIGHTING THE DRAFT

The Reagan election promise of no draft or registration has evolved into prosecution and jailing of registration resisters.

In carefully planned moves, the Justice Department began selective prosecution of young men who refused to register. The first was Enten Eller, a 20-year-old member of the Church of the Brethren. The church is based on pacifism. Eller's father is a Brethren theologian and his grandfather and great-grandfathers were Brethren preachers. He declined legal and political defense efforts and was convicted and sentenced to three years probation and ordered to sign up in 90 days or go to prison. He has vowed not to sign up or appeal, saying that God has "selected me to do this."

The second prosecution hit Ben Sasway in San Diego, California, a town which as the retirement spot for so many ex-military persons is a true hotbed of reaction. During Sasway's trial the judge refused to allow Sasway to explain his motives for refusal saying that they were "irrelevant." Sasway's motives had to be silenced by the court because Ben made it clear that he was opposed to the "reckless militarism" of Reagan; he added, "I will not be a tool of the military misdirection that involved us in Vietnam 15 years ago."

MINORITIES and MILITARY

Almost 50% of the ground combat casualties in Vietnam were minority troops. While comprising only 10% of the population at the time, Blacks suffered almost 20% of the deaths in Vietnam. Mexican Americans died in the highest proportion to their numbers--they suffered almost 20% of the deaths. Asian and Puerto Rican minorities made up another 7% of those killed in action.

While allowed to die in greater numbers, minorities were also rewarded with a higher rate of less-than-honorable discharges. Three-hundred thousand of the 800,000 bad discharges during the Vietnam era went to Black GIs.

Of course the service wanted minorities to feel at home so hate groups like the KKK have been allowed to breed like rats unhampered by any military regulations or harrassments.

And just to top it all off, unemployment among Black Vietnam vets is now at 18%. Welcome home, GI! Uncle Sam is proud of you!

CONTINUED Vietnam

for more than 10 years at a cost of $140 billion (and a huge later cost which is still be figured out). And with all this, we lost!!!

Nixon did not pull out because the U.S. was winning but because the Vietnamese were. Some generals today are saying we lost the war but never lost a battle--but what the hell did we "win" at Khe Sanh or in the Iron Triangle or in Laos or Cambodia besides having some hole punched in some officer's promotion card.

The simple fact is that neither the American people nor the American GI's fighting in Vietnam thought that the goals --real or imagined--were worth the lives and the money being squandered. The war was lost on the battlefield in Vietnam and in the hearts and minds of the American people.

During the war VVAW led tens of thousands of Vietnam vets in demonstrations against that war. No comparable group of Vietnam vets ever rose to challenge VVAW or our goals. In fact when VVAW brought 1500 Vietnam vets to protest Nixon's renomination, the Republican Party could only come up with 6 vets to support the war (and some of these did not even support Nixon). Vietnam vets knew firsthand about the real war--and opposed it.

Today the Reagan Administration seems determined to get us involved again, perhaps in Central America or the Middle East. In a place like El Salvador, the U.S. allies will be at least as brutal and corrupt as Diem or Thieu or Ky. Vietnam was not a mistake; neither will a U.S. venture in some other part of the globe except for the GI's who buy the government's lies. Vietnam was not a "noble cause" except for those who fought to Bring Our Brothers Home after they had made the mistake of going. As for foreign aggression, hear the worlds of General Smedley Butler, one-time commander of the Marine Corps and twice winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor:

"War is conducted for the benefit of the very few at the expense of the masses. Out of war a few people make huge fortunes....How many millionaires ever shoulder a rifle?

"For a great many years as a soldier, I had the suspicion that war was a racket; not until I retired did I fully realize it.

"I was," said Butler of his own role in Central American intervention, "nothing more than a gangster for Wall Street."

DIE FOR REAGAN'S SINS
TRAGEDY

three to nine children. Men will come, traumatized by the memories of their wives and children being tortured to death. In Mexico, they have found a welcome among the poor farmers of Chiapas. But as the refugees come in increasing numbers, the resources of the region, already severely taxed, begin to give out and new tensions arise.

Is the U.S. really supporting the present military government in Guatemala? Consider:

*Congress approved $250,000 for military training aid to Guatemala this past summer.

*President Reagan will soon ask Congress for $4 million to buy the junta replacement parts for helicopters.

*Under President Carter, arms sales to Guatemala were banned because of massive human rights violations. Our State Department is now looking into ways to lend weapons to the junta in order to get around the weapons' sales ban.

*The State Department, which says it's getting reports of an "improved" human rights situation in Guatemala wants the Treasury Department to OK an $18 million loan as part of a $30 million rural telephone project. The fact that such a project will only facilitate the army's communication and by extention, the increased slaughter of innocent people, isn't going to deter the State Department.

The response of the Guatemalan people to decades of repression and centuries of exploitation (by the same class of large land-holders and businessmen that pushed El Salvador into a civil war) has finally become clear. With no possibility of making even minimal changes in the existing social structure, the people have organized to defend themselves. At one level this means forming committees for village self-defense. On another level, a coalition of guerilla groups is active, harassing and attacking the military convoys and installations. At a third level, exiled Guatemalans are attempting to focus international attention on the suffering of their people.

A new Guatemala is being born. The process is a terribly painful one, accompanied by grave physical and psychological trauma. But the people are confident in their eventual triumph. Further U.S. military or economic aid to Guatemala will only prolong the agony of the people. When you hear Reagan asking for aid so that Guatemala's junta can fight the "communist subversives," think of the nine-month old baby in Guatemala who was found, dead, with a piece of her mother's nipple still in her mouth. Then write your representatives in Congress to demand that no aid whatever be sent to the Guatemalan junta.

John B Elder

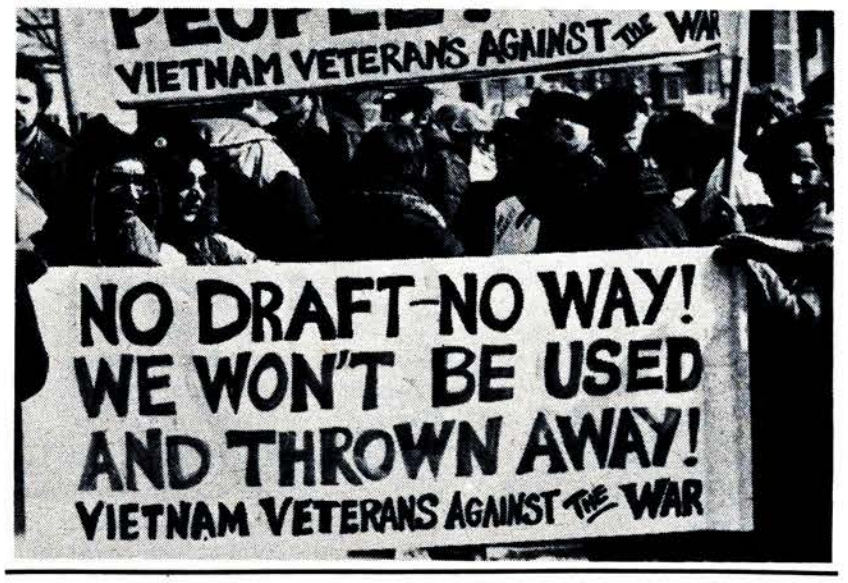
(The article on Guatemala is written by a VVAW member from San Antonio, TX, who spent time during the summer at the refugee camps in Chiapas, Mexico.)

Used in War, then Thrown Away

THE VIETNAM ORDEAL

Vietnam was an ordeal for a generation of Americans--not only those who went off to fight the war or those who fought against it here at home. Yet, the Reagan Administration would have the American people forget what happened in Vietnam in the interests of getting the U.S. involved again somewhere else. Vietnam meant 55,000 dead American troops; 300,000 American troops disabled; and the war was one of the major causes of the present problems with the U.S. economy.

What was Vietnam? A mistake? A "noble cause"? Foreign aggression? It was, in fact, all of these things to different people, depending on where you happened to stand.



The real U.S. involvement in Vietnam started during World War II. The OSS (the group that later became the CIA) sent agents to make contact with anti-Japanese guerillas in Southeast Asia. (The French who had controlled the area were "Vichy" French who, with their Nazi leanings, supported the Japanese.) Of the different Vietnamese nationalists, only the Viet Minh under Ho Chi Minh had the national network of underground organizations and guerillas fighting.

Ho Chi Minh met with the U.S. operative, Major Patti, and they agreed on anti-Japanese actions. The U.S. dropped supplies behind the lines to Ho and the Viet Minh helped Americans downed behind Japanese lines. The first American advisors helped train, equip and arm the Viet Minh. In 1945 the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was formed in Vietnam with Ho Chi Minh as its President. American planes flew over Hanoi in celebration of the founding. The Vietnamese Declaration of Independence was modeled on the American version, and Ho asked the Americans to honor their committment to independence, citing the Atlantic Charter and the UN Charter on self-determination.

But the U.S. government was trying to improve relations with France both economically and diplomatically, and the French price was the return of French colonies. U.S. relations with Vietnam turned sour. President Truman refused to answer any of Ho's cables or letters. The end result was that France got Vietnam--and all her former colonies--in return for close ties with the U.S.

The French return to their former colony was not easy; first, they had to arm and use former Japanese POW's to establish a foothold. They were able to retake the towns but not the countryside. In 1950, General Giap launched a general offensive against the French which, though it was premature, resulted in 6,000 French killed or captured. What the French government described as a "victory" was portrayed by commentator Bernard Fall as France's "greatest colonial defeat since Montcalm died at Quebec." France turned to the U.S. for aid; at first it was $10 million a year but grew to $1 billion by 1954 so that by the time of the final French defeat at Dien Bien Phu, the U.S. was footing 80% of the bill for the war.

With the French out, the U.S. moved in. According to the international agreement Vietnam was to be temporally divided into north and south, with free elections to take place nationwide in 1956.

Ngo Dinh Diem, a Vietnamese Catholic living in Boston was chosen Premier of South Vietnam which was 95% Buddhist. The U.S. set up MAAG (Military Assistance and Advisory Group) to train a "nationalistic" Vietnamese force of a quarter of a million men. This force was largely made up of Vietnamese who had fought for the French. In 1956 the U.S. refused to go along with the elections because, in the words of President Eisenhower, "Ho Chi Minh would win 80% of the vote in a free election." U.S. involvement continued and so did U.S. money and men. American presence rose to 500 under Eisenhower and grew to 15,000 under Kennedy.

At the same time, Diem was in trouble; former Viet Minh helped to support a number of groups to oppose Diem and the French successor in Vietnam, the U.S. Buddhist unrest rose in the cities, and in the countryside, Diem's cronies were killed. The U.S. decided to back a coup of Vietnamese generals to topple Diem. Not only did they get rid of Diem and assassinate him, but they proceeded to kill off each other on a regular basis.

The situation was desparate. More and more American troops were put in to replace Saigon troops who could not or would not get involved in the fighting. The Saigon government had no real base other than the aid it got from the U.S. and the U.S. got exactly what it paid for: pimps, prostitutes, cowards and gangsters, masquerading as a government and a military.

This was bad enough. But it was coupled with the incredible arrogance on the part of the U.S. government and military leaders. They could not believe that Asians could stand up to the might and technology of the U.S. As the war progressed, we went from one stage to another, and there was no real change in the situation. Strategic hamlets, Vietnamization, search and destroy, pacification: all these programs were tried by the French in the past, but somehow the U.S. thought we could make them work. They didn't!

The American people were not being told of the plans or policies of their government. To the contrary: Lyndon Johnson ran as a peace candidate in 1964 saying, "I won't send American boys to do the fighting for Asian troops." Americans were told that Vietnam was two countries (missing some 2000 years of history) and that the North was invading the South. All of this didn't do much to answer the questions of the 19-year-old American fighting the guerillas in South Vietnam. Saigon leaders were protrayed as the Vietnamese version of Jefferson and Lincoln--never mind the drug-pushing, black marketeering or torture cells.

Somehow, in order to save Vietnam, we had to destroy it. We bombed hospitals to save orphans, we sprayed Agent Orange and destroyed the land in order to save crops, we burned hamlets to save villages and turned Vietnam into a huge whorehouse in order to save Vietnamese culture from Communism.

As GI's in Vietnam we saw the often stark realities of Vietnam and could compare them to the "truth" the American people were being told. We saw the corrupt Saigon generals making money hand over fist while their armies would not fight. We saw the hate in the eyes of the local villagers who never welcomed us as "liberators" with bouquets of flowers. The only Vietnamese who seemed to want us there wanted greenbacks in return for drugs, booze or women or all three. We also saw the enemy fight and had to admire both his bravery and tenacity in taking on U.S. tanks, planes and helicopters with grenades and rifles. We supposedly valued human life--our enemy did not. Yet the U.S. paid $600 per rubber tree destroyed to the Michelin plantation, and no more than $120 to the family of a Vietnamese child who was killed in the course of a mistaken U.S. bombing.

We fought up hills, winning what the press called "victories," but we saw half our friends die so that the company body count could go up to enhance the career of some lifetime officer. And then we'd give up the hill and have to fight for it again later on. The war was not something to be won or lost by the grunt but 365 days to be survived.

The U.S. tried everything to win. We dropped more than three times the total tonnage of bombs dropped by both sides in World War II. We conducted "operation Phoenix" during which the CIA and Saigon government killed up to 200,000 suspected members of the Viet Cong. We defoliated 10% of the land much of it permanently. We bombed, bribed, shot, killed and burned

turn to preceeding page

Who Are We, Where We Came From, Who Can Join

VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

Vietnam Veterans Against the War began in 1967 to join the ranks of those who wanted an end of U.S. involvement in Indochina. Basic principles of the organization have continued ever since: we have fought against unjust wars, whether the U.S. invasion of Indochina or the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan. We have supported, by whatever means were possible, those who are fighting for their own liberation.

From its early days VVAW has operated on the knowledge that the government will give vets the things we need only when forced to do so--that vets get nothing for nothing. We've learned that when one vet fights alone, there is a limited amount he or she can do, but when veterans unite to fight together, there is no limit on what can be accomplished. VVAW has seen some real successes: helping to put an end to U.S. troops in Southeast Asia, helping to get Nixon tossed out of office on his ear, winning (to a great extent) amnesty for many who resisted the Vietnam War, getting the Veterans Administration to begin the process of looking for answers to Agent Orange poisoning and to recognize Post-Vietnam Syndrome (now called "delayed-stress syndrome") as a service-connected [illegible]

VVAW has consistently stood with the interests of vets of all eras, especially Vietnam and Vietnam-era vets, and this has often brought us into conflict with more traditional veterans' organizations. While the Legion or VFW have hawked more wars, VVAW has fought against future U.S. wars of aggression as in Vietnam; while traditional organizations have waved the flag at every opportunity, VVAW has always asked "Why?" We've opposed moves toward war, are fighting against registration and the draft which will follow, welcomed vets with bad discharges into the organization and fought to get the discharge system dropped entirely from the military.

We know what it means to have been unsed once by the government and its corporate backers, and then thrown away with a bad GI Bill, wretched healthcare, Agent Orange ravaging our bodies, no jobs and all the other problems that Vietnam vets face. We do not intend to see our children go through the same thing in the next war for somebody else's profit!

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VVAW welcomes all people who want to join together to build a fighting veterans' organization. Although the majority of our members are vets of the Vietnam-era, we want all veterans of all ages--as well as interested non-vets--to join to build the vets' struggle. Membership requirements are participation in the life of the organization, and payment of $1 per month to the national organization with a $5 initiation fee.

VVAW is a democratic organization. Chapters decide on local projects and programs under the general guidelines of the national program. Chapters elect local leadership and representatives to the National Steering Committee meetings where major organizational decisions are made and national coordinators elected. These coordinators are responsible for day-to-day leadership and publish the national newspaper, THE VETERAN.

_____ Signature

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DELAYED STRESS

left the field, gave us no time to talk out our experiences with our peers. We returned alone and sometimes with drug or alcohol problems. We closed ourselves off from our families, our wives and friends.

Vietnam Veterans Against the War began its work around what was then called "Post Vietnam Syndrome" in New York City at the end of 1970. Rap groups were formed to help vets with their problems and to educate them about the true nature of the war. We found that understanding the war shifted the blame and guilt that the vet often piled on himself or herself and directed that guilt at the government and governmental agencies like the military or the V.A. where the guilt properly belonged (and belongs today). It was a period too when a few professionals began to see the problems that vets faced; Drs Robert Lifton and Chaim Shaton were pioneers in educating the public and gathering professionals to help vets.

The V.A. at this time did not recognize any delayed psychiatric reaction to the war as a service-connected disability. Unless the problem surfaced within one year and was in the vet's health records, it did not exist according to the V.A. VVAW demanded service-connected status, education of V.A. staff members to the problems, and the creation of community rap groups for affected vets.

Tragically, it took the death of a Vietnam vet named Dwight in Detroit, in May of 1971 to start things changing. Dwight had earned the Medal of Honor in Vietnam only to die in a grocery store hold up. His story started the pressure building to deal with the unique stress of this war which was, then, still four years from being over.

At present some 33% of those incarcerated in U.S. prisons are Vietnam vets. Not all of these individuals are in for crimes directly linked to ptsd, but how many would not be there if programs existed to deal with the problems of returning veterans?

VVAW has become closely tied to the struggles of vets facing incarceration or already in jail for crimes linked to their experience in Vietnam.

Don Kemp returned from Vietnam in 1967. While a member of the Army's Long Range Reconaissance Platoon attached to the Rangers, he was ordered to kill civilians, go on bizarre missions and fire on "friendlies" to keep the war going. When he arrived home, he quickly developed heavy, paranoid symptoms: carrying guns, guns in the car and the house--he even slept with a gun under his pillow. He received a small pension and a semblance of medical help from the V.A. In July, 1971, Don's psychiatrist was planning to leave the V.A. and noted that there was improvement in Don's condition; Don was therefore discharged from all V.A. treatment. He went home and, that night, when awakened from one of his terrifying nightmares by his wife, he shot her with the gun he kept under his pillow--the gun he kept to protect himself from the enemy who populated his dreams.

Don received a natural life sentence for first degree murder of his wife and even after a second trial, still sits in Waupun State Prison in Wisconsin.

In June 1971, in a street in Monterey, California, a man was arrested and accused of first-de-

TURN TO NEXT PAGE

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PTSD

gree murder for beating another man to death with a log. He couldn't make bail, couldn't afford a lawyer, couldn't testify in his own defense. The public defender didn't even look into his long history of V.A. psychiatric treatment. He only convinced him to plead guilty to second-degree murder. He was sentenced to 5 years to life in prison.

Bill McFarland had enlisted in the Army at the age of 17 because his best friend had been killed in Vietnam. He worked with scout dogs, saw heavy combat and was sent home severely wounded in both legs, one arm, and his head.

Back home at the age of 19 Bill was in and out of jail and the V.A. and nowhere could he get treatment. A year after sentencing he was given sodium pentathol; he remembered that the man he killed had pulled a gun: it was self-defense, survival like that practiced in Vietnam.

From 1973-75, VVAW, Penthouse, a number of independent vets worked and wrote letters to say that Bill should be released. Finally that happened, but how many 10's of thousands of Vietnam vets will never make it outside again. When they were sentenced, delayed stress was not a defense and treatment was nowhere available.

On August 22, 1980, Jearl Wood, a Black Vietnam vet feeling the pressure of job harrassment and a genuine case of post traumatic stress, turned on his foreman at the Ford Torrence

plant just south of Chicago and shot him. Nearly two years later, a jury in a Cook county court found Jearl Wood not guilty by reason of insanity.

The case started slowly with an opportunist lawyer eating up most of the money. A new lawyer wisely restructured the defense on a foundation of post-traumatic stress disorder. A defense committee of Jearl's fellow workers, union officials, a spectrum of political groups, clergymen, and VVAW closely coordinated a campaign to reverse public opinion, educate people and show support for the case. With the help of Drs John Wilson and Charles Figley, an unprecedented verdict was reached: ten years ago it would have been impossible to find Jearl not guilty, but finally the original demand of VVAW for recognition of delayed stress is a reality. Today it is a service-connected disability and a valid court defense.

None of this slow progress in the last decade has been accomplished without dragging the V.A. hospital system along, kicking and screaming all the way. Not all V.A. doctors and administrators stood behind this, but there was a clear policy that refused to acknowledge that a stress problem even existed.

For years the V.A. only locked up vets in hospitals, pumped us full of drugs and told us to forget about the war: that wasn't the problem. Throughout the early 1970's, the only groups that existed to help vets with post traumatic stress problems were VVAW and our rap groups, and independent vet centers like the "Flower of the Dragon" in San Francisco. Simply, it was a case of vets helping vets because they are brothers in trouble.

Pressure on the V.A. and the government by VVAW, the DAV and others helped to break the V.A.'s typical determination to do nothing. Professionals worked to change the V.A. manual to recognize delayed stress as a reality so it could be used in court defense and in V.A. disability cases. All this took until late 1979-early 1980.

What To Do???

If you know that you have some problems adjusting to your experiences in Vietnam, first, remember that you are not alone. V.A. statistics say that 20-33% of all Vietnam vets are in need of direct psychiatric aid. This does not mean you are crazy--if you felt nothing from that insane episode in our lives 10,000 miles from home you would really be in trouble.

Go to your nearest Vets Center, your VVAW Chapter, the DAV Forgotten Warrior Project or other independent vet rap group in your community. Get involved in the vets movement in your area.

The first thing the V.A. will look for before awarding a disability is stress-producing incidents in Vietnam:

--Firing your weapon at the enemy and killing him or her.

--Seeing our own dead or wounded, or finding yourself in a situation where you thought you wouldn't survive.

Then the V.A. will ask question about your recollections or dreams or nightmares, your feelings of guilt or nervousness or problems with interpersonal relationships.

The first shrink you see has the power of recommendation for your eligibility for a disability. If he turns you down you can take your problem to the V.A.'s Adjudication section, but that's not easy.

Under the manual used to determine eligibility for ptsd, these are the requirements:

1) You must have a neurosis problem (not limited to having made death threats).

2) You must have additional problems which may include:

A) Flashbacks or dreams.

B) Emotional withdrawal from everyday problems.

C) Hypertension or exaggerated response to sudden noises.

D) Other related problems such as sleep disorders, memory impairment, survivor guilt feelings, lack of concentration on normal subjects, reluctance to relive combat experiences through discussions, movies, etc, and a numbness to normal activities or emotional responses.

3) That your condition began to show up within a year after the experience that triggered it.

Finally, veterans should get involved--we cannot afford to blame ourselves. VVAW rap groups have always worked on the premise that understanding the true nature of the war and its contradictions allows the vet to turn the guilt, the rage and frustration away from him or herself and channel that energy into something constructive. Get involved with the veterans' movement in your area and help out--not just for yourself but for the many vets who cannot help themselves. There were plenty of casualties in Vietnam, plenty more since we came home, and plenty who aren't yet on the casualty roll. None of them can we afford to forget. And building the fight for decent benefits for all vets (regardless of discharge) and no more Vietnams is the best memorial they--or we--can have.

THE VETERAN
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Patronage vs Vets
V.V.L.P.

Just when you thought that 15 or more years of progressive peoples' interactivity might evolve into something with national significance and value, the Reagan Administration has come up with the well financed "Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program" (VVLP). Just when many of us were getting to understand that we were all into something together, this elitist, officer-dominated and community ignorant program surfaces.

In case you don't know of this latest effort to suppress any and all community-based vets organizations, here's the basics--as far as the Administration will let them seep out.

VVLP is a parcel of patronage that begins in the White House and "trickles down" through the Private Industry Council, the Disabled American Veterans and finally, ACTION who will sign the checks. VVLP is based on material well-being; in fact, that seems to be the criteria for being "readjusted." Simply, it's the Reagan version of the rich getting richer, financed by a myriad of agencies that are hell-bent on sweeping under the rug Vietnam and Vietnam vets who still give a damn.

Consider, if you will, these positions and structures on which VVLP will be built:

VVLP "volunteers" will work at the senior levels of the communities' business and government structures to help the communities build and maintain a coordinated, community-wide effort to help the Vietnam veteran. The "eyes and ears" of the volunteers will be the paid project directors. The program will, as a result, according to its own propaganda be able to stimulate a flow of new and able volunteers to compliment and reinforce existing government (read Vets Outreach Centers) and veterans' organization programs (read DAV programs, individual programs such as the "Swords Into Plowshares", or the Madison, Wisconsin Vets House, or hundreds of other community-based programs around the country). You can already see the scenario: Sir! Private Citizen requests to speak to the program director, sir! It's for damn sure the program director isn't going to be asking the vets for any kind of input; his job description mandates that all vets "go away" with any community concerns that might exist; the VVLP will take care of all such items.

A second more offensive, yet enlightening piece of VVLP propaganda says that the VVLP "will affect national defense in a perhaps modest, but direct way. By affirming the integrity of military service during the Vietnam era, the program will help serve to restore a national perception that military service is an honorable calling." It may start a whole new trend--jobs for Vietnam vets on recruiting posters helping to persuade our younger brothers and sisters to get used the way we did. For those of us who found the Vietnam experience something we are not likely to advertise to anyone, the whole approach is hard to believe.

It's a new wave of Vietnam veterans. No longer are Vietnam vets those with problems like unemployment, or post-traumatic stress, or inability to readjust to a society which was out of step with what the vet had experienced. According to the VVLP the Vietnam vet is a successful surgeon, the state treasurer, banker, or some equally acceptable position. And, presumably, those "few" Vietnam vets who don't fall into these august categories, will have the good grace to disappear. Or at least be quiet.

Hogwash! VVAW has no way of knowing exactly how many Vietnam vets have been successful in the terms that these turkies use, but we know that VVAW is proud to speak for one hell of a lot of vets who are working like hell and barely getting by, or a lot more who can't find jobs at all, or a hell of a lot more who are stuck away in some hospital or another or drugged away on the street and who aren't asked questions in any poll. And we can see that the VVLP has absolutely nothing to offer these people.

VVLP looks to us like one slick attempt to pave the way for the current efforts to downplay and then eliminate the Vets Outreach Centers. The "new wave" Vietnam vets, armed with their titular distinction as "Directors" will have the push and the bucks to usurp the credentials--long established and hard-earned--of many of the Vet Center personnel and community-based organizational personnel. There will then come the move from person to person concern to the more calculated approach of "big business." In short, the needs of vets who now make up the clientele of the Vets Outreach Centers will be met not at all.

The bureaucratic dismissal of "Operation Outreach" cannot make the hardships nor the continued discomforts of the Vietnam vet disappear. The Vets Centers certainly have not been successful in keeping every disturbed Vietnam vet off the streets and protected from his own well-taught reactions, but it seems likely that having the Vets Centers to turn to has helped keep the number of crazy vets down--at least a little.

Nothing will be done until the fire in the fight is renewed in earnest. We've come a long way with much more distance yet to cover. Let's renew our collective efforts to awaken the conscience of all those vets who are willing to set quietly by while the government shoves the remnants of the last war under a corporate carpet and hurries along to the next war.

Looking For a 'Nam Friend

G.I. SEARCH

Looking for someone you served with in 'Nam? Agent Orange Victims of NJ (Box 233, Englishtown, NJ 07726) is acting as a clearinghouse for this information. Send them names, dates of service, unit and location in 'Nam and they'll try to match up people. ***Please include a Donation to Cover Costs***

THE VETERAN welcomes letters, comments and criticisms. Please write. Also, send along any poetry, drawings, photos or stories you would like to see in the paper.

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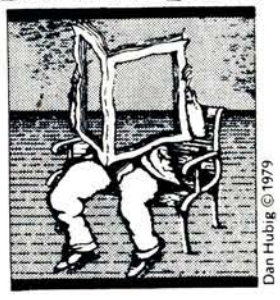

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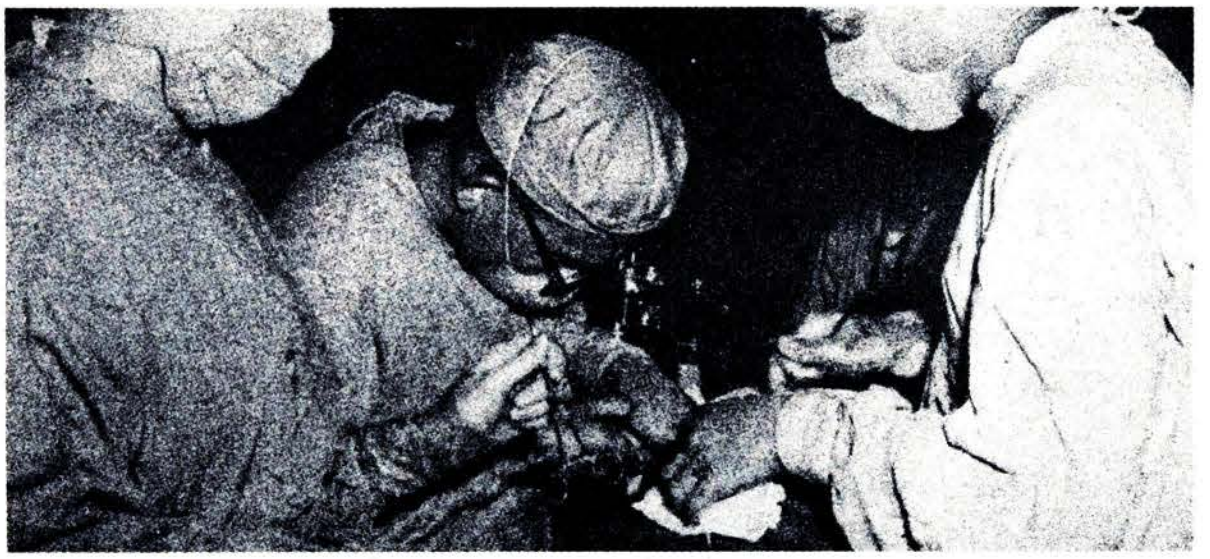
RECOLLECTIONS

VVAW invites contributions to "Recollections"--stories or poems describing the military or Vietnam.

"Don't Tell Me Women Don't Know About War...!"

A WOMEN VET SPEAKS



I remember you on your way home from the war. We met in the Pacific. There were so many of you. I was part of the surgical team that worked around the clock to save your life and tried to save your limbs. Some times we did and some times we didn't. And I remember the holes in your guts. We sewed those up too.

You don't remember me, but I remember you. I held your hand when they brought you to the Operating Room while they put you to sleep. Many times I was the only female on the surgical team trying to hide my emotions

How could I forget you? The faces you had and the faces you didn't have. Some of you came back so many times to haunt me with your faces blown off. And for some of you there was so little we could do for you. We gave you more skin grafts when what you needed was a whole new face. The despair and hopelessness I felt I saw in your face and I saw in your eyes. I remember changing your dressings and the roaches that came crawling out of the wounds of your stumps. The roaches that were eating you alive and you didn't know it. I tried to hide the roaches from you and stop from vomiting and still provide you with nursing care all at the same time. Yes, those were difficult days, for me too. And I remember your screams when they had to amputate your legs. I had compassion for you and cared about your recovery. I held your hand then, too. After the surgery was over I cleaned the blood up in the Operating Room and then had to carry your amputated leg to the laboratory and prepare the room quickly for the next case, all day and sometimes all night. There were so many of you. There were days when I felt haunted from the constant stress of taking care of so many of you.

Don't tell me women don't know anything about war because we weren't out on the "front lines." I had battle fatigue, too. From those grueling years in surgery; it was a war zone there, believe me. There were days when the stress and strain and blood and guts almost had to equal what you experience.

I went home to a lonely apartment and started drinking to kill the pain I had in caring for you. That hurt me even more. After awhile I didn't feel anything and fooled myself and thought I was coping better. But the alcohol was slowly taking its deadly toll on me.

The Army trained me well for the surgical team to help take care of your war-torn bodies, but they didn't train me for that "other war." The one we had. When you turned on me. You turned on me with your unrelenting sexual harrassment and assaults. You battered me. I met you on Army post a fter Army post. Some of you were black and some of you were white but you were all male. Maybe you were frustrated from the war or maybe the Army trained you that way, I don't know. There were days when I felt terrorized by the psychological warfare going on between us. Then there was the added unrelenting stress of working in surgery all those long days and nights. I'm still damaged. The Army never recognized that war, either. I felt trapped. I tried to ignore the harrassment and hoped you'd leave me alone. I felt so powerless to cope being a woman in a man's army. There was no where to turn for help with a male chain of command. I tried .hough. Women only made up 2% of the Army population back then. I thought if I worked hard, you'd stop your harrassment. The Army never trained me to fight back either--only to save your life. So I was at a terrible disadvantage and not prepared for your ruthless attacks. I was stunned and felt helpless. I was devastated. I drank more. I isolated myself. My problems got worse.

When I got out of the Army 4 years ago I came home with some of the same problems you did. Alcohol, antisocial behavior and isolation from family and friends. I had a hard time holding down a job, too. I also had to change occupations--I couldn't go back to surgery. Like you I was misunderstood by society, too. No one took my military service seriously either because I was a woman. So in one way it was easier for me than for you to quietly hide out when I got home. Then a year ago I came down with a severe despression and anxiety and was hospitalized. I was exhausted and suffered fatigue--and I still never talked about my experiences in the military. Maybe I was suffering with delayed stress syndrome, I don't know. The scars are still there and they're deep.

After all these years I'm just now starting to cry. I've cried for days. And I'm starting to feel again. I'm hoping that maybe I'll recover from the emotional trauma I held inside me for so long from all those years of taking care of you and all that abuse that women have to put up with in the Army that seems built into the system.

I want the American people to know I'm not going to hide out anymore. It is not easy for me to write this letter--and I hope you will print this letter in its entirety.

I recovered from the alcoholism but I desperately need psychiatric care for a full recovery. I tried to get help at the VA but they don't have programs for women--and I'm a service-connected veteran, too! I'm worried that if I don't get the help I need and soon, I may lose a fine job that I value very much.

After serving in the armed forces for so many years, and helping to save and mend so many lives, now I need help and there is no place for me to go for help. And I am angry.

I urge all Americans, and especially women veterans who came home from those war years as shattered and battered as I did to put some pressure on the VA to recognize the special problems women have in coping with the shattering experiences they had while they were on active duty. Special programs should be provided by the VA for women because they are urgently needed.

The VA and the American people need to know that women need help, too. We've been silent too long. We count too, after all, we volunteered our services and took time out of our lives to help save other lives and to serve our country, too.

And if we can't get help at the VA we'll just have to go to the Veteran Outreach Centers in the community and start our own groups.

But please, women veterans, come out; we've been hiding too long. It's the only way we're going to recover.

Judy Marron, writer of the "Woman Vet Speaks Out," took her own life by leaping from the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. While the books will say that she killed herself, the above article makes it clear that she was in fact the victim of the sexism of the U.S. military, and the neglect of those government agencies whose job it is to help veterans. We of VVAW can only express our feeling of sorrow that another valuable part of the struggle is no longer with us, and our hope that the goals expressed in the article can be reached by others. That is, as ever, the most lasting memorial we can help to build.